M 175 "Some 60 leagues from the mountains, the marshes of the Pilcomayo River, in the direction of the river Bermejo, are peopled by numerous Tonocotés and Lules who drew away from the territory of Tucumán at the time of the appearance of the first Spanish conquerors." (page 54)

"The nation which lives on the other side of this one (the Teuta) (1)

1. Possibly from "teuj-taj," meaning "big river," the Mataco name for the river Bermejo.--J. Pelleschi.

is the Mataguaye nation, which is the one closest to Jujuy." (page 76)

"Some are called Mataguayes Coronados and others Mataguayes M 191 Churumatas. The Coronados speak Guaraní, although this is not their mother tongue. The Mataguayes Churumatas understand and speak several tongues, such as Quichoa [sic], Guarany [sic] and Ocloya which they pick up from the captives which they hold as prisoners in their territory. They also understand the language of the Tobas. These M 175 Mataguayes were distributed in the following fifty towns: Neantiche, 621 Mocoy, Collemage, Auncapinhe, Hucohas, Hocohá, Oyaha, Natetehá, 103 Chinitiohé, Onin, Anuyguay, Alesnuy, Chayabo, Chioquiose, Hucoha, Chayquehé, Chachinamí, Pelo, Cahotochin, Nacalgoy, Chenesse, Halcacha, Cheneschá, Peque, Nitilinquin, Guays, Guocopa, Hucuchinami, Tiuquiahó, Hocalá, Leguelsehá, Oyaho, Carininquin, Yantis, Luguarache, Neglisehé, Loquelesse, Queyshé, Cotonhá, Tapela, Onoralgualache, Poytin, Hopitata, Hopitahé, Tatotehé, Lechonehá, Lohoteá, Tactoy, Apagatin, Rimpihá." (page 76)

Not one single time do we find the ending "gasta," although ● 194 something similar to "a" and "aho" does appear. A negative proof must not be given undue importance, yet it ought not to be completely ignored [574].

IX

The Description of the Mataguayos
etc. continues

C M 175 "All these nations which we have mentioned with their towns, that is: Taynuyes, Teutas, Mataguayes, Agoyas, Xolotas, Tobas, Mocobies, Yapitalaguas, and also Aguilotes who live among the

III

Phonology

a. Confusion between K. I. Ch, etc.

Among the Matacos sound shifts such as the following are very frequent: quia, quie, quii, quio, quiu to tzá, tzé, tzí, tzó, tzú and to chiá, chié, chií, [236] chió, chiú, and vice versa. Also quiá, etc. to tiá, tié, etc. So it is that we can use any one of the following words for "sheep": tzonataj, quionataj, chionataj, and either huenquié or huentié for "little bird." However, the general use of one of these sounds in preference to another marks off one dialect from another. So it is that the Matacos who live adjacent to the Tobas use tzá, tzé, etc. while those who live near the white settled area use chiá, chié, and so forth.

This linguistic wanderings, may we call them so, are easily understood if one takes great care and if they concern polysyllabic or even bisyllabic words, but when they are found in conjunction with words of only one syllable they are extraordinarily confusing. For example: who could have guessed that tzac-da in one dialect was the same as quiaj or quioj in another?

Withal, it is no less strange and curious than certain phonetic shifts which are instinctive, if we may use this term, with man in general, and which are to be found also amongst us Europeans. For example, in Milan they say chiesa and not quiesa, and the Spaniards say cuchara instead of cuquiara or cuquiaya as in Italian, and so with many other words; squiachare and stiachare (1) to

1. In Italian these words are written schiacciare and stiacciare.

squash. So it is that of the Indians of Quichua leanings, those living in the areas surrounding Santiago often use na while the Collas or inhabitants of Bolivia use ña. Example: na instead of ña, meaning "already," and nojca for ñojca meaning "I." The same thing occurs in Italian, in Portuguese and in Spanish, for

example: nina for niña and farina instead of fariña, and so forth.

And what shall we say of the inversion of letters and syllables? How often does it not happen that on speaking rapidly a word becomes changed because of a change in the order of syllables? Now this is a real instinct which is inherent in language generally, which results in certain sounds in one tongue sounding wrong to a person speaking another sister tongue. Thus the Italian cantilena reappears as cantinela in Spanish, and also guirlanda as guirnalda, and birbone as bribon -- the vir bonus (!) of Latin, and so forth.

And these Matacos also on occasion interchange the order of syllables in their words, for instance: in their way of speaking melon becomes nelom, and so also with other words.

b. Confusion of L and R, etc.

It is to be noted that one of the characteristics of this language is the absolute lack of words having the sound of the Spanish r, which is a letter which they find quite unpronounceable, except with great effort on their part, and even then it is not pronounced correctly.

Their neighbors, however, that is the Tobas, Chulupís, and [237] Chiriguanos, do have an r sound. The Mocovitas serve as a sort of connecting link between the two and pronounce r in the French manner, that is, in their throats something like gr.

It may seem to many that the sound of the French r is more rather than less pronounced than the Spanish r, but I am of a contrary opinion, and base my affirmation on what I have observed among the Matacos, for whom it is easier to say Pegro than Pero, and Peilo than Pegro. Anyway, the fact that r can be pronounced (even though imperfectly) by the Matacos reveals that the lack of the sound r in the language of these Indians is not due to an organic defect in the speech apparatus but rather to convention or to the tongue's tendencies. Their not having practiced this sound for centuries on end combined with the action of physiological heredity may have been the cause of their having partially lost the ability to trill their r's as the Spanish do and, with the passage of time, this may result in their losing the ability to do so completely.

And yet it may just be that the whole difficulty is merely an aural one, the ear being unaccustomed to the new sound and, while striving to reproduce it, falling short of the mark because of the already settled habits of the mouth organs -- anyone of us who has attempted to learn one of the ever so many foreign languages has experienced the same thing.

c. The letter "D" and its variations

Neither can they pronounce the d clearly, although there are words which have sounds that come close to it, but always in the combination td and th and pronounced almost as the English do at the beginning of a word in which there is a pronounced occlusion. Examples: "How?" - tdé hoté; "he eats" - theucque; "marksman" [in Spanish tirador --Translator] - thilalol.

d. B, D, F, G, P, T, joined to the semivowel L.

I have yet to hear, from a Mataco, the pronunciation of b, d, f, g, p, t, jointed to an l or an r. This brings about those great changes in acquired Spanish words which render them almost unintelligible, as for example: ccailá instead of cabra; Pailó instead of Pablo; hlẽno instead of freno; and hueiló instead of pueblo. And here is another peculiarity: a labial which makes up a single syllable with ua, ue, ui, uo, uu, they cannot pronounce, and in its stead they use an aspirated h voiced softly. This defect or degeneration of sounds is also to be met up with often among the country people in this Republic[Argentina--Translator]. So that they sometimes say gueno instead of bueno, and juego instead fuego.

While on this subject of the articulation of these sounds it is remarkable how they agree with the pronunciation of my teacher of the Chinese language, an extremely intelligent cook called Ayaó who can write in his own tongue. The Chinese, apart from lacking the r, as is notorious [238], cannot pronounce those same combinations of letters which the Matacos find impossible to manage, nor can they pronounce the d, among many others. So

it is that it often seems to men when I converse with Ayaó, that I am talking to a Mataco, there being also cetain common physical traits such as skin color, slanted eyes, coarse straight hair, and flattened nose. When he attempts to say adós he says alio; instead of tres he says tles; instead of propio, lopio; instead of señora, señola; instead of teatro, teetelo. It is often almost impossible to guess the Spanish word which he is trying to copy, as, for instance, when he says teetelo for teatro; ollejaio for ovejas; lialio for diario; poole for pobre; huelo-lía for buen día and huela-loche for buena noche.

And, since we are talking about the subject, I must make note of the fact that I have been impressed that these Chinese have a large number of words ending in lo. It is also worth mentioning, or so it seems to me, the manner inwhich the l takes the place of r and also, in a general way, o the other sound combinations which they find difficult to reproduce. Regarding the r among the Chinese, I must confess that I have a word, among the two hundred collected, in which there i an r; it may be, however, that the position occupied by thisletter contributes to facilitating its pronunciation, as happens wth d among the Matacos. The word to which I refer is tai-hi-ró, teato, in which the h is pronounced in such a way that it takes awaymuch of the energy and forcefulness of the r. Can it be foreign? This language sacrifices a great deal to auphony and thereore has, where two vowels meet, more apostrophes than do French or Italian, for instance: nam-nu-am (meaning "not I") slids its syllables to such a degree that only one consonant and one reenforced vowel are left. This gives rise to certain consonant grouping in which each consonant must be pronounced and given its dueweight, as for example in atplei which must be pronounced át-pe-léi, almost átt-(e)-p-(e)-lei, and means "What is your name?" In this phenomenon there is a parallel with the common usage of French slang and with the English auxiliary verbs "do," "will," "shall," and so forth, when used in relaxed conversation. There are also duplicated consonants, even at the end of words, such as in yelatáss, "horses." For this reason one must be cautious and weigh carefully each element contained in a word or a phrase, and not gloss over them carelessly. At the least expected moment we see

it reappear with all its train of syllables. These differences are of special importance in the oratorical art of these Indians. Mention must also be made, however, of the fact that word endings such as j and que are often suppressed and lost, their place being filled by placing an extra stress on the preceding letter. Example: yelatá for yelatáj, meaning "horse"; ndto'c for ndtó-cque, meaning "much." Furthermore, the position of accents varies in accord with the position of the word in a sentence. For example: asado["roast," barbicue--Translator] is pú-cuè, while "put on the roast" is ph'o a-pú-cue. These muted endings mentioned above reveal themselves when followed by another word or when the speaker wishes to pronounce the word carefully. The same thing occurs as happened to the French doncque (dunque) and avecque.

[239] e. Vowels and diphthongs.

In the study of these languages, if we use our five vowels in order to reproduce the Mataco sounds, we will find that we will inevitably have to use diphthongs. By diphthong I mean the union of two or more vowels which are to be pronounced simultaneously and in such a way as to reproduce that complex sound of the diphthong which includes all the component vowel sounds. These would be natural diphthongs which, if one could visualize them fixed in writing, would later give rise, because of the inevitable alternations in pronunciation, to conventional diphthongs such as the French ou, the Latin ae and oe, and the German eu. Therefore, I hold that in a written language all diphthongs are to be considered as symbols of a previous and different phonetic expression.

In studies of this sort it is obvious that the alphabet of any one language is quite insufficient, each language requiring an alphabet of its own -- unless one were willing to adopt a whole string of letters longer than a litany. We must add that our alphabet (the Italian) is really one of the poorer ones, particularly because of the lack of a gutteral sign and a sign signifying aspiration, two sounds which are very common in a large number of the world's languages. And our alphabet would be even poorer were

it not that it has been artificially enriched from outside by the addition of the letter k, which does not belong to us.

f. Sounds foreign to the Spanish phonetic system.

If we are to transcribe the Mataco language using the letters of our alphabet (the Italian), we must modify it in the following way which will, in a general and loose way, serve to transcribe many other languages: Addition of the German ch, (the German j would also be useful but it would be too easily confused with the Italian j which has the sound of i) an aspirated h as in certain French words; a sign to express the prolongation of a vowel sound (not its reduplication) for which the same h might do (as is the custom in German and which, in my opinion, goes hand in hand with the physical fact of the pronunciation of h); an English th, but having a quality somewhere between t and d, thus becoming a sort of consonant diphthong; an ou diphthong, not having the sound of the French u but spoken in such a way as to pronounce both vowels extremely quickly. The diphthongs o͡éú or é͡ú are pronounced as has already been said; an aspirated nasal h, which I indicate with a comma on the upper left side, in order to be able to differentiate it, and a liquid l which is very similar to il. Vice versa, we must abolish certain letters from our alphabet, such as r, d, f, v, and only use b in combination with p, which latter is also to be used only with b and with a special sound the pronunciation of which can be [240] approximated with a final h, thus forming what might be called the diphthong p-h, the p ending with a breathy explosion.

In this way, and without the introduction of strange new characters which are never easily retained in the memory and which one would have had to know beforehand, I have transcribed my Mataco, my Guaraní, my Quichua, my Mocoví, my Chulupí, my Toba and my Chinese, with the Spanish phonetic system in my notes and with the Italian system in my books, to which latter end I substituted ch for j and i for y.

These signs are fairly well known so that we, (that is, the reader and I) who are not experts in the field of linguistics can read the words without any great pronunciation difference, thus

194

satisfying the requirements of the inquisitive, if not those of the scientist (1).

> 1. In this translation, as is the case in dictionaries, the Spanish alphabet has been used for the reproduction of Indian words. J.P.

A nasal intonation runs through the whole of this language. There is hardly an occasion when h, j and q at the beginning of a syllable is not pronounced nasally -- the exception being when the final consonants of the preceding syllable is lost. I have come upon this phenomenon in all the South American languages with which I have had anything to do, but in none has it been so marked as among the Matacos. It may be because I know the other languages even less than I do this one. It is to this tendency that I attribute the shift from the Spanish ending ando to the Indian anno -- for example: tomando changes to tomanno -- our European languages have not escaped this change unscathed, witness the two letters m and n of our alphabet, the sonorous en and em of French, and the strangely comic way in which everybody pronounces words of endearment addressed to little children.

Another characteristic of this language is the apparent arbitrariness of its sounds. The reader will readily be able to appreciate this by just leafing through the dictionary: there seems hardly a time when the same word is pronounced in the same way, even when spoken by the same person, and this is even worse when it forms part of a sentence. It is truly enough to drive one to despair (!) and would lead to who knows what comparisons of inferiority but that, fortunately for the Matacos, there is a complete vindication and absolute proof to the contrary in that most glorious, polyphonic, word-rich (and in this sense -- that is of arbitrariness of sounds -- similar) language: English!

Chapter IV

Of words and the manner of their formation

192
196

It is interesting and amusing to see the way in which these people form words to designate an object new to them. Observation is the supreme teacher.